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Super-Spies May Need Discipline

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THE WIDOW of a Marine Corps colonel is suing the Central Intelligence Agency on the charge that drugs administered to him during investigation of his application for a job caused him to commit suicide.

Earlier, a Canadian of Estonian birth, a lecturer against communism, sued on the ground that statements issued by a CIA agent labeled him a double agent. The case is still pending, but the CIA has claimed "absolute privilege" not to testify, a concept not in keeping with American law in regard to public institutions.

THESE TWO CASES added to the flap over the CIA infiltrating an agent into an educational mission sent overseas by Michigan State University raise important questions about the accountability of CIA.

The CIA, it has been estimated, employs about 15,000 persons and spends about a half billion dollars a year. What accounting it does is to the President and to an informal "joint" committee of House and Senate Armed Services and Appropriations committee members.

Other congressmen get only the sketchiest of accounting of the

work and expenses of CIA. Because of this there is a move on to formalize the "watchdog" committee set up and expand its membership to include Foreign Relations Committee representatives.

"Intelligence" is necessary for any nation that intends to survive. It is imperative to know what enemies, potential enemies and even friends are planning. And spies, by the nature of their trade, must be secretive.

The Central Intelligence Agency was conceived as a result of World War II, in which intelligence was a weak point. At first we did not even have enough people who understood the Japanese language.

After the war the CIA grew and grew, a kind of secret university of experts. Its service to the United States undoubtedly is tremendous.

BUT OURS is a nation of checks and balances—the best governmental idea that has so far appeared on this earth.

The CIA, of course, is answerable to the President and to the informal congressional committee.

But, somehow, the controls should be tightened. Secrecy in detail of operation is mandatory; secrecy of policy guidelines should not be.

Congress, it would seem, has a clear duty to more precisely define the role of the CIA and inform the country what that role is. Congress also has a duty to demand and exercise much more precise overseeing and control. Once that is done public confidence in the CIA will be greatly strengthened.